



Whiteside County Highway Department

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Whiteside County Highway Department Winter Operations Policy

It is the intent of the Whiteside County Highway Department to provide safe and reasonable winter driving conditions on county highways for the general public. At the same time, the method for snow removal must economically balance the benefits against adverse effects of de-icing to highways, structures, and the environment on the county highway system. This policy is based on one shift of personnel due to budget constraints that limit the size of the maintenance staff, equipment, and overtime. As a general rule, the highway department makes every attempt to keep all county highways passable during the time when a majority of the public will be at or traveling to and from work.

The snow removal operation is a primary function of the highway department. It is under the immediate supervision of the Maintenance Foreman and the general supervision of the County Engineer. Each individual can institute a snow call-out of any magnitude that would carry out this policy.

Generally, snow removal operations will begin after an accumulation of 2 inches or more. Snow operations will *begin* at approximately 5:00 AM, if conditions exist, and end at approximately 7:00 PM so that the operation may again be ready at 5:00 AM the next morning, if necessary. Because the County does not employ any seasonal staff to assist with snow plowing operations, it is important that the employees are able to have adequate time-off in order to rest before returning to maintenance operations. Specific conditions may warrant deviation from these times as determined by the Maintenance Foreman or County Engineer. The Department will respond to call-outs for specific emergencies (fire, ambulance, power outage, etc.) on a 24-hour as-needed basis. Unlike the Illinois Department of Transportation, the County does not operate 24/7 during snow events.

The amount of personnel and equipment assigned to a specific winter storm event is divided into three classes:

De-icing Only: Freezing rain, icing conditions

A limited salt application policy is utilized. Routes are run using trucks and tailgate spreaders to salt at stop signs, curves, hills, railroad crossings, bridge decks and through towns and villages, if applicable. In addition to these locations, if weather conditions warrant the use of de-icing agents, attempts will be made to de-ice complete sections of County Highways on the higher volume roads. It is important to note that salt does not work at extremely low temperatures and there are times in which ice control materials are not applied. When the wind is blowing hard and the temperature is cold enough, snow will often times blow across the road, rather than build up on the road if de-icing agents are not present. If ice control materials are on the road they tend to catch the snow and accelerate the drifting process.

Light Snows: Up to \pm 3 inches of snow accumulation

Routes are run using snowplow trucks only. It usually takes 4 to 5 hours to make a complete round on each route. A "round" is defined as one plow width (9') in each lane.

Heavy Snows: Over \pm 3 inches of snow accumulation

Routes are run using trucks with additional equipment such as motor graders or end-loaders being available for areas with extensive snow accumulation or drifting, if time and staffing permit. Holes are punched one lane wide through drifted areas so that vehicles can get through the whole County Highway System before widening out to 2 lanes. It could take anywhere from 4 to 5 hours to a matter of days in extreme conditions of heavy snow and high winds to have at least one lane of travel open on the entire system.

It is not the department's policy to secure a "bare pavement" on all roads. It is the intent of this policy to clear the County Highway System of accumulations of snow and drifted snow due to high winds in order to make the highways "passable" as soon as practicable. Salting of highways after snow removal has been completed will be limited to the areas described under De-icing Only if icy conditions still exist.

Snow removal shall generally progress in the following order of priority:

1. Clear traffic lanes of accumulated snow
2. Plow wider widths after 2-way traffic is established
3. Plow highway shoulders
4. Clear intersections
5. Check intersections and remove snow obstructing vision where snow has been piled

No time frame is established to accomplish the above priorities. Weather conditions, severity of snowfall and one-shift personnel limitations will dictate the department's ability to adhere to the priority list. Additionally, snow removal operations may be temporarily suspended if visibility is so poor the snow plow drivers cannot operate safely.

While snow plowing operations of township road districts are similar to the County's, the timing of snow removal operations of township road districts does not necessarily coordinate with the County's policy. Road districts operate on their own separate budget and time constraints so any similarities are coincidental.

On behalf of all highway authorities, we ask that the traveling public drive cautiously during the winter months when snow and ice are present. During heavier snow events and extremely icy conditions please limit trips to essential trips only. Vehicles that get stuck on the road become a hazard to other vehicles, limit our ability to remove snow and ice, and extends the amount of time it takes for us to complete our routes. Your cooperation in this matter is sincerely appreciated.